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A hybrid breakout

Flemish artist finds voice in embrace of different art forms



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A visual artist, filmmaker and musician, Floris Vanhoof is the rare kind of artist who is as comfortable on stage as he is in galleries and photography darkrooms. And now that he's been selected for the Young Belgian Art Prize, a whole new audience will be able to get a taste of his messy, unsettling art.

I first learned about Floris Vanhoof through his minimal and noisy music years ago. But he's not actually a musician; nor is he a visual artist or a filmmaker. Instead, he's a hybrid of all three. This makes him a rare kind of artist in Flanders, and one we should be proud of. With nine other promising local artists, Vanhoof was recently chosen by an international jury to participate in the Young Belgian Art Prize. This means he may finally break through to a larger audience. At the concurrent exhibition at Bozar, Vanhoof presents radical works that work on or, if you will, attack visitors' visual and auditory senses. If you believe in art that's messy and unsettling, you'll find these pieces amazing. Vanhoof, born in the Antwerp town of Mol in 1982, holds a Master's degree in audiovisual arts, with a specialisation in experimental film. But music was his first love. Since as far back as he can remember, he's been interested in music. "But I wasn't destined for music school," he says. "As a high-school student, I followed an evening course in photography. In the darkroom, I always listened to music, and that's when I thought, it has to be possible to combine images and sounds. That's why I decided to study audiovisual art."

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Still, his ultimate goal wasn't to become a director, and whenever he submitted his films for

festivals, something went wrong. "Either I didn't receive a reply, or the film was selected, which meant it would be shown, and afterwards I got my DVD back in the mail," he says. "And that was it. But I wanted more, so I started giving performances and took a film projector with me on the road."

This unconventional approach ended up being a good fit for Vanhoof, and over time, stages became the main place to encounter and experience his art. Only recently did he begin to regularly work in the context of museums or galleries.

"I've been travelling across Europe and the States for more than 10 years to give performances. And I use the latter in the broadest sense of the word – concerts, but also performances with projections. But in the end, there's no difference. Similarly, for me there's no difference between the music or sounds I make and the images. It's the same language."

At the Young Belgian Art Prize, Vanhoof is presenting two works. "Slides" combines four modified slide projectors, 35mm slides, a single-board Raspberry Pi computer and a soundtrack. "A lot of plastic toy figures – a couple of monsters, the grandmother from *Ghostbusters*, you name it – lie around in my studio. They inspire me and one day, I wondered: 'What do they think about me?'"

Vanhoof started photographing the toy figurines, and got as close with his lens as possible. "The slides looked very banal, but I photographed those slides through a microscope," he explains. "I went so close you could only see the grain of the photographic film. By projecting them quickly with four projectors, it's as if the grains are dancing on the screen."

"Stripes", the second work, was born out of Vanhoof's quest to "make a simple film that's still interesting to watch". The piece consists of two modified 16mm film projectors, microcontrollers (a type of small computer) and a soundtrack.

"In a darkroom, I put stripes on two ribbons of unexposed film reel. When projected, these stripes seem to move up and down and if you combine two projectors for one screen, you get a

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moiré effect: your brain can't fully process what your eyes are capturing. That's a point I find highly interesting."

Add some colour filters and a confronting soundtrack and you get the most unsettling but also the most overwhelming artwork you'll see at the Young Belgian Art Prize.

Until 13 September

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For Floris Vanhoof, there's no difference between the music and images he makes. "It's the same language," he says.



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With "Stripes", Vanhoof wanted to make a simple film that would still be interesting to watch.

THE YOUNG BELGIAN ART PRIZE

The biannual Young Belgian Art Prize was established in 1950. It was called *Prijs Jonge Belgische Schilkunst* (Young Belgian Painting Prize) until 2011, even though it had been open to more than just painters for decades already. Previous winners include Hans Op de Beeck, Manon de Boer and Sophie Whettnall. The contest is open to visual artists from all disciplines under the age of 35; they also need to be Belgian or to have lived here at least for a year.

The international jury that chooses 10 artists from the many submissions and awards the three Young Belgian Art Prizes is made up of curators and directors from prestigious institutions like Tate Modern in London and Cologne's Museum Ludwig. Unlike in previous editions, the laureates weren't announced at the opening of the exhibition this time. Instead, the winners will only be revealed at the close. The public can also participate by voting for the ING Public

Prize. Hannelore Van Dijck, from Antwerp province but currently based in Berlin, is another breakout star of this year's edition. For her onsite work "Tunnel", she covered the walls of a Bozar corridor with charcoal drawings, with the geometrical patterns resembling a metres-high, impenetrable fence. The result is a melancholy work that produces an uncanny feeling in the viewer that's difficult to shake off. Among the other highlights are

the small, unobtrusive oil paintings and a series of lithographs by Ghent-based Spanish artist Lola Lasurt, as well as Emmanuel Van der Auwera from Brussels and his unsettling video "A Certain Amount of Clarity", which captures the reactions of teenagers as they watch a real murder on YouTube. Finally, Emmanuelle Quertain, another Brussels artist, is featured with a couple of oil paintings on aluminium.